

Yuen Foong Khong: Analogies at War

Chap. 3

The U.S. Vietnam decisions could serve as a case study due to their substance and holding a least likely case for Khong's arguments. The analysis surveys both "why" and "how" questions: why the U.S. intervened in Vietnam and how it went about it. A successful explanation of the choice of methods (*i.e.*, "how") is at once an explanation of why the U.S. intervened and its intervention took the form it did.

Focusing on explanations of options has some advantages: it

- holds a prospect of a richer and more satisfying answer: why nonintervention was rejected and why among prointerventions one –or some—were chosen
- reflects the way policymakers actually make decisions in a world of options
- the choice of option may have crucial bearings on outcomes (success or defeat)
- “explaining the choice of options holds more promise of theoretical enrichment than merely explaining policy”

Explanations of options oppose the traditional explanations of Vietnam policy of the U.S., *e.g.*, containment or credibility theses.

Emphasis may be placed on the private, as opposed to the public, record of analogies among policymakers –though they most frequently coincide, *i.e.*, policymakers have no hesitation to make clear for their public audience (share/inform/explain/justify) the historical informative analogies affecting their decisionmaking.

Proof of the analogical reasoning theory: Options inconsistent with analogical lessons must be rejected. Among those basically consistent with the analogies lessons, those fully consistent with most, if not all, lessons are expected to be chosen.